

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Black River State Forest supports a great diversity of wildlife species, including game, furbearer, and bird species common to Wisconsin. The property's diverse mix of conifer and hardwood forests also has one of North America's richest diversity of breeding songbirds. A wide variety of birds migrate through the state forest as well. The numerous man-made flowages, natural streams and the Black River provide important migratory bird habitat. Endangered and threatened species (listed species) on the Black River State Forest include the following terrestrial vertebrates: Blanding's turtle, wood turtle, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Trumpeter Swan, Whooping Crane, and Kirtland's Warbler. The state forest also contains several Species of Special Concern including various mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, fish, and mussels. Terrestrial vertebrates of special concern include the timber (gray) wolf, Black Tern, Northern Goshawk, Merlin, Le Conte's Sparrow, four-toed salamander, American Bittern, Karner blue butterfly, bullfrog, northern myotis bat, and arctic shrew.

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

The wildlife management program on the Black River State Forest focuses on maintaining and enhancing habitat and assessing the population status of the important game, non-game, and listed species. The abundant wildlife on the state forest requires diverse forest habitats in all the various successional stages from very young through old growth. Diverse and healthy wildlife populations will be maintained by managing the composition and structure of forest habitats integrated with the management objectives and activities outlined for each land management area in the Land Management Section of this plan. Wildlife habitat values are further assured by the wildlife biologists working with foresters on timber sales in order to maximize tree species diversity and improve vegetative structure, consistent with the management objectives for the area.

Forested Habitats

Approximately 20% of the state forest will be managed in areas dominated by jack pine. Jack pine stands will be grown to biological maturity and regenerated through the clearcut system. Jack pine will be harvested in a rotational manner to offer various age classes throughout the forest, offering a shifting mosaic landscape pattern where at any one time any age class can be found. Jack pine forests will be managed

through natural regeneration, prescribed fire, and plantation establishment.

Approximately 8% of the Black River State Forest will be managed in areas dominated by aspen through clearcutting with reserves or coppice methods. A diversity of different age classes will be present by harvesting some aspen stands before economic rotation and some aspen stands beyond economic rotation. Aspen forests are typically diverse and contain a mixture of pines, oaks, and maples.

Approximately 21% of the property is currently dominated by white pine, but this percentage is expected to slowly increase in the future throughout the forest. Individual trees will be grown to biological maturity. Stands of white and red pine will be thinned from below and grown to biological maturity. Active forest management will allow the slow expansion of white pine throughout the property.

Approximately 2% of the state forest will be maintained in the scrub cover type. Scrub oak will be managed through clearcutting with scattered reserve oaks and pines.

A small percentage of the property will be maintained in grass and brush openings. Forest openings and bracken grassland communities occur primarily in areas managed for aspen, white birch, oak, and jack pine. Openings will be managed in a shifting mosaic offering corridors and stepping stones of openings between existing permanent large openings found at Dike 17 Wildlife Area, Jackson County Forest, private land, and open marsh land. Openings will be maintained by mechanical mowing, hand cutting, and prescribed fire.

Long-lived trees such as red oak, white pine, and red pine may periodically be left as residuals in clearcut areas as long as their biological maturity allows. Trees will be harvested if they will not survive until the next stand entry. Small clumps of aspen-birch may be reserved in clearcuts for Ruffed Grouse budding and cavity trees. A ring of aspen trees may be reserved around grassy openings. Aspen and white birch trees may be reserved along wetland edges to act as Ruffed Grouse budding trees and as cavity trees.

Vegetative height diversity will develop in areas managed by selective harvests. Most hardwood stands will be managed to promote an all-aged structure including shrubs, saplings, mid-canopy trees, canopy trees, and super canopy trees.

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Some large, full-crowned trees with dens and cavities as well as dead trees (snags) will be maintained on appropriate sites in all management areas. These trees will be maintained unless they are unsafe, cause aesthetic concerns, or increase insect pests.

Selected areas and stands will be managed for old growth forest characteristics through active or passive management. Old growth characteristics that provide important wildlife habitat include abundant coarse woody debris, large old trees, abundant large snags, cavity trees, den trees, tall super-canopy trees, and various sized canopy gaps with dense young trees.

Non-forested Wetlands

All non-forested wetlands, including various poor fens, sedge meadows, shrub-carr, rich fen, and open bogs will be protected. These wetlands provide habitat for a wide variety of wetland wildlife including Species of Special Concern. Protective management prescriptions for non-forested wetlands are outlined in the Land Management Section of this plan. Where applicable, these wetlands will serve as a link between existing and new openings.

Ruffed Grouse Management Areas

Ruffed Grouse areas will exist throughout the forest implemented through normal forest management practices and various sizes of scattered timber harvests.

Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Areas

Sharp-tailed Grouse areas will be maintained and created in a shifting mosaic through the use of normal forest management practices. Dike 17 Wildlife Area will act as a core site, with larger clearcuts acting as corridors and temporary habitat areas, until these cut units regenerate. In certain situations, burning, scarification, and delayed planting may be incorporated into these cuts to delay regeneration and offer a few extra years of Sharp-tailed Grouse habitat.

Wildlife Flowages

Twenty flowages, specifically managed for wildlife habitat, exist on the Black River State Forest. These will be maintained; however, there may be situations, on a case-by-case basis, that warrant abandonment of an individual flowage. The determination for abandonment will be a joint decision between wildlife, fisheries, engineers, and forestry staff. No new flowage construction is planned.



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Aquatic Habitats

Wild rice bed establishment will be attempted on four flowages within the Dike 17 Wildlife Area on the Black River State Forest. Wild rice is significant in Native American culture and is an important wildlife habitat. Wild rice beds will receive an annual inventory and be managed for wild rice production.

Undeveloped lake and stream shoreline is important aquatic wildlife habitat. All undeveloped lake and stream shoreline will be managed to protect water quality, maintain wildlife and fisheries habitat, and enhance aesthetics. Shoreline management will include vegetative zones. They will be maintained by following Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality when performing all forest management activities.

Ephemeral ponds and permanent small ponds provide important breeding sites for amphibians and waterfowl. These sites will be protected through vegetative management adapted to minimize impacts and by following BMPs for water quality.

ENDANGERED, THREATENED, AND SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Individuals of all endangered, threatened, and special concern wildlife species will be protected. All known critical habitat for these species will be protected or maintained through management consistent with the Habitat Conservation Recovery Plan or with other guidance developed in consultation with the Bureau of Endangered Resources. Examples of critical habitats include sites used for breeding and foraging such as Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Great Blue Heron nest sites, wood turtle nest sites, Kirtland's Warbler nesting sites, lupine stands for Karner blue butterfly, wolf den and rendezvous sites, Northern Goshawk nest territories, and Trumpeter Swan and Common Loon nest sites. The Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) will be checked prior to all timber sales, ground breaking projects, and recreational and trail development.

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT

Activities associated with timber sales directly impact wildlife habitat and represents the primary method for completing forest habitat work on the Black River State Forest. Wildlife biologists will review timber sales annually and provide recommendations to maintain and improve wildlife habitat.

WILDLIFE POPULATION MONITORING

Populations of important game species will be monitored through annual surveys at the local or regional level. Species

surveyed include white-tailed deer, black bear, Ruffed Grouse and mammalian predators. Waterfowl are surveyed through the annual statewide waterfowl breeding survey. Populations of important endangered, threatened, and Species of Special Concern will be monitored through annual surveys. Species surveyed include Bald Eagle, Osprey, Trumpeter Swan, Great Blue Heron, Northern Goshawk, Sharp-tailed Grouse and timber (gray) wolf.

Rare and uncommon wildlife such as badger, Great Gray Owl, Black Tern, and Merlins are monitored through reports from staff and citizens. These reports are organized in the Bureau of Endangered Resources' Natural Heritage Inventory.

The possibility of elk being reintroduced into the Black River State Forest is a consideration, and may occur during the life of this plan. The Black River Elk Management Plan addresses management implications of these herbivores on the landscape. Any reintroduction of species will follow state guidelines and best management practices.

WILDLIFE POPULATION MANAGEMENT

Game species are managed through hunting and trapping seasons. Population goals are set for each game species for a local or regional area. Hunting and trapping regulations and population goals are not set through the master planning process. Game populations are managed through regulations and goals set by the Natural Resources Board and the public is involved in all stages of this review and implementation process.

WILDLIFE RESEARCH

DNR, tribal, and university sponsored wildlife research occurs on the Black River State Forest. Current research projects include work on black bears, timber (gray) wolves, turkeys, and Kirtland's Warblers. New research projects may be undertaken provided they do not conflict with the master plan.

FINANCIAL AND WORKFORCE CONSTRAINTS

Activities on the Black River State Forest are implemented based on financial availability and workforce constraints. A wildlife biologist and wildlife technician, stationed at Black River Falls, are funded through the Wildlife Management Bureau and spend part of their time working on the state forest. No endangered resource personnel are on the Black River State Forest staff.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN



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Water resources in the Black River State Forest provide habitat for a range of fish communities. Management goals and activities for these waters vary by type of water and angling potential. The three main water resources within the forest are warm water streams, warm water lakes, and cold water streams. Management for each type of water resource is described below.

WARM WATER STREAMS

Warm water streams comprise the major water resource within the forest. Most warm water streams are tributaries of the Black River and flow from four major watersheds: East Fork of the Black River, Halls Creek, Morrison Creek, and Trout Run/Robinson Creek. Stream sizes range from 1st order headwaters to the Black River which is a 6th order stream (average flow of 290 cubic feet per second). Surface water in the area originates in wetlands with significant peat deposits. This organic material stains the water, giving the streams an amber color. Due to a lack of significant ground water input, these waters have summer temperatures that regularly get above 70 degrees and thus do not support trout. Most have moderate to low flows and are relatively infertile, although the Black River can have fairly high nutrient levels. Forage and game fish are the predominant species. Many of the small tributaries were dammed to create flowages for wildlife habitat. Little, if any, habitat work is conducted on these waters, and the only fish stocking that occurs is muskellunge to the Black River. For the most part, streams have adequate natural in-stream reproduction or are adequately stocked by fish from the river or from impoundments. The basic statewide fishing regulations currently apply on these streams except for a 40 inch minimum length limit on muskellunge in the Black River, East Fork of the Black River, and Morrison Creek. Currently there are no plans to modify them. Warm water streams in the forest include the Black River, East Fork of the Black River, Morrison Creek, and lower Halls Creek.

Management Objectives

- Maintain the health of waters on the Black River State Forest and their fishery potential.
- Provide quality harvest as well as trophy opportunities (where applicable).

Management Activities

- Continue to conduct electro-fishing and netting surveys according to statewide monitoring protocols and provide results to the public.
- Continue muskellunge stocking in the Black River.
- Conduct beaver control as necessary by limiting dams that slow water flow, impede fish migration, and increase water temperatures and sedimentation.

WARM WATER LAKES

There are very few natural lakes in the forest, and these are mostly oxbow type abandoned channels within floodplains of the major rivers. Most standing waters in the Black River State Forest are impoundments and flowages created by damming of small streams. These are typically acidic, infertile, and have a maximum depth of less than 12 feet. Since most were created for waterfowl and wildlife habitat, fisheries management is a secondary objective. Fisheries, when present, consist of warm water forage species, largemouth bass, panfish, and northern pike. However, most provide only periodic fisheries due to winter freeze-out conditions. Big and Little Oxbow Ponds are stocked with trout prior to the season opener and only provide a short-term put-and-take fishery for these species. By mid-summer, water temperatures are too warm to support trout. Examples of warm water lakes in the forest include: Teal Flowage, Pigeon Creek Flowage, Townline Flowage, and Whitetail Flowage.

Management Objectives

- Maintain the health of warm water lakes and their fishery potential.
- Provide a quality harvest when and where applicable.
- Improve access, especially for those with physical disabilities.
- Improve habitat conditions for those lakes with fishery potential.

Management Activities

- Continue to conduct electro-fishing and netting surveys according to statewide monitoring protocols and provide results to the public.
- Monitor winter water chemistry for those lakes with a fishery to determine when winterkill occurs.
- Continue trout stocking in the Oxbow Ponds.

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COLD WATER STREAMS

There are very few cold water streams within the Black River State Forest. These waters have summer water temperatures that do not get above 70 degrees and have moderate flows. The fisheries present in most of these waters consist of brook and/or brown trout. The major waters in the forest that fit this designation are: Robinson Creek and Valentine Creek.

Management Objectives

- Maintain self-sustaining trout fisheries.
- Maintain the health of these waters and their fishery potential.

Management Activities

- Continue to conduct electro-fishing surveys according to statewide monitoring protocols and make results available to the public.
- Conduct beaver control as necessary by limiting dams that slow water flow, impede fish migration, and increase water temperatures and sedimentation.

GENERAL HABITAT MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

Habitat loss and shoreline/bank development are common issues on all waters within the state forest. Management activities that enhance habitat (such as tree drops, half logs and bank structures) may be applied on waters, consistent with the site's land use classification, where they would provide a meaningful return to the fishery. Riparian shoreline and stream bank activities have a tremendous effect on the health of the fisheries. Buffer strips and shoreline restoration will be promoted on all waters in the forest.

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

Fishery management activities are ultimately based on financial availability and workforce constraints. Attempts will be made to maximize efforts to manage these fisheries for the health of the resource first and secondly for public opportunity.

FISHING REGULATIONS

Control of fish harvests through lake and stream specific fishing regulations is the most effective tool in managing

fisheries on state forest waters. A variety of fishing regulations are in effect on the state forest, including closed seasons, bag limits, and length restrictions. These regulations are not set through the master planning process, but through an annual rule making process involving local fisheries staff and warden, conservation congress, DNR Secretary, Natural Resources Board, legislature, and the governor. The public is involved at all the stages in this process.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Aquatic invasive species of concern for the Black River State Forest include Eurasian water milfoil, purple loosestrife, and zebra mussel. Management of invasive species in the waters of the forest will follow Wisconsin's Comprehensive Management Plan to prevent further introductions and control existing populations of aquatic invasive species.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The waters in this area provide unique fisheries research opportunities within impoundments. State and university sponsored studies that have meaningful management applications will be encouraged. These types of studies can provide insight into fisheries issues that will benefit waters well beyond the boundaries of the state forest. All the waters in the forest boundary have management research value. Issues that are of significant management concern are always changing, and any of these waters may meet the requirements of important future studies. Research activities will be carried out in locations and using methods that are consistent with the management classifications and management objectives in this property plan. On-going fisheries studies within the forest include: annual spring netting survey of Teal Flowage to monitor fish population response to recent habitat improvements, annual spring netting survey of Pigeon Creek Flowage to assess fishery potential, frequency and effects of winterkill, and possibility of habitat improvements, and periodic spring netting surveys of other warm water lakes to assess fisheries potential and frequency and effects of winterkill.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN



RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

BACKGROUND

Recreation on the Black River State Forest is important to many people and plays an important role in the regional tourism economy. Visitors have been coming to the Black River State Forest for generations, and those who vacation or live near the forest know the beauty of its water resources, the diversity of its trails, and the extent of its recreational facilities.

Since the forest was established, annual visitation to the Black River State Forest has increased steadily though the form of recreational interest has changed over the years. Annual visitation to the Black River State Forest is now approximately 300,000 visits per year. Popular recreational activities include fishing, hunting, ATV riding, snowmobiling, skiing, camping, and horseback riding.

The Black River State Forest Master Plan will maintain most of the existing recreational amenities. Changes are designed to meet the demands of today's forest visitor and to improve the quality of the state forest's offerings. Increasing the number of electrical sites at modern campgrounds and enhancing the motorized trail system to address environmental concerns, increased usage, and trail connectivity represent the most significant actions addressed in the plan.

Current and planned recreational facilities are identified on Map 2.27 in the Appendix. An implementation overview of planned recreational amenities (i.e. what the property will look like when all proposed changes are implemented) is identified on Map 2.28, also in the Appendix.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- Provide opportunities to ride snowmobiles, ATVs, and motorcycles as part of a regional trail network. Trails will be sustainable, well-maintained, and will maximize safety and minimize the impact on sensitive areas, water resources, and other recreational uses.
- Provide modern, rustic, primitive, and equestrian camping opportunities.
- Provide high quality opportunities for day uses such as picnicking, swimming, hiking, and biking.
- Provide opportunities for boating and paddling on the Black River and its tributaries, and non-motorized boating on flowages and ponds within Dike 17.
- Provide a system of aesthetically pleasing, sustainable trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and horseback riding that offer opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the forest.
- Provide opportunities for visitors to gain a better understanding of the natural resources, scenic amenities, and native communities found in the forest.

CAMPING

The Black River State Forest provides a variety of camping facilities from rustic to modern. Amenities include three family campgrounds, one group camp, one equestrian campground, two canoe campsites, and backpacking by permit.

Changes at camping facilities focus primarily on improving amenities at the modern campground to address changing preferences and demands for services by today's recreational user. In the more rustic campgrounds, the number of campsites may be reduced if the use of these facilities continues to decline. In addition, the Black River State Forest Superintendent has the authority to modify the length of time campgrounds are open based on budget and staffing levels.

TABLE 2.26 CURRENT AND PLANNED NUMBER OF CAMPSITES

Name	Camping Type	Acres	Current		Planned	
			# of sites with electricity	Total # of sites	# of sites with electricity	Total # of sites
Castle Mound	Modern	43	6	35	up to 28	35
Pigeon Creek	Rustic	22	0	38	0	as few as 27
East Fork	Rustic	28	0	24	0	as few as 15
Horse Camp	Equestrian	15	0	12	0	12
Group Camp	Group	9	1	1	1	1
Canoe Camping	Primitive	NA	0	2	0	2
Total		117	7	112	up to 29	as few as 92

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Modern Campground

The Black River State Forest has one modern campground. In 2008, Castle Mound Campground provided 35 campsites with limited campsites open during the winter. Electricity is available at six sites. One site is ADA accessible. The campground provides paved roads, shower facilities, flush toilets, a firewood shed, and a sanitary dump station which are open seasonally. Water is available year-round. A shop, storage building, maintenance yard, pole building, and contact station are currently located near the campground. Campsites are reservable at the Castle Mound Campground from May through September.

Improvements at the Castle Mound Campground will increase the number of campsites with electricity up to 28 sites to meet current and future visitor expectations. Extended spur lengths at selected campsites will accommodate larger and longer vehicles. In the future, relocation of the trailer dump station will be considered to improve access for campground users. Vault toilets will be replaced with flush toilets. A new shower facility will be constructed. The existing shower building will be maintained and re-evaluated in the future for its functionality due to its current location.

Additional planned improvements at the Castle Mound Campground include construction of a new office and maintenance building. The office (contact station) will provide accommodations for all recreational staff. The existing office building (contact station) will be removed and evaluated for conversion into an ADA accessible cabin. New interpretive signage will be incorporated with the new office building. These improvements will require a redesign of the existing service drive. The existing maintenance facility will be razed after the new building is completed.

These projects will enhance the quality of facilities offered at the Castle Mound Campground and will accommodate campers looking for a less remote, more developed camping experience. The improvements will also address health and safety issues for staff, consolidate employees into one office facility, and improve customer service. In addition, the road redesign and modernized buildings will enhance the aesthetic quality of the camping experience for visitors.

Rustic Campgrounds

The Black River State Forest has two rustic campgrounds providing a total of 62 campsites. East Fork Campground is open seasonally while Pigeon Creek Campground is open year-round. All campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis and no electricity is provided. The campgrounds, located at opposite ends of the property, include vault toilets, hand pumps for water, a firewood storage shed, and a contact station. One ADA accessible site is available at Pigeon Creek Campground.

If visitor use at the rustic campgrounds declines by 20% over three consecutive years (based on the 2000-2005 average), at that time the decision will be made to either reduce the number of campsites or to upgrade the facilities to modern campgrounds with amenities such as showers and flush toilets. The decision will be based on recreational trends and visitor demand in the area.

**The 2000-2005 average annual number of visitors ("visitor use") was 7,679 for Pigeon Creek, and 4,354 for East Fork.*

Additional changes at the rustic campgrounds include increased self-registration, and the installation of erosion control measures between campsites and along the river shoreline at East Fork.

Equestrian Campground

The Equestrian Campground has 12 sites designated strictly for horse camping available on a first-come, first-served basis. Each site has a picnic table, fire ring, and tethering post; one large group fire ring is also available. The campground has vault toilets and a seasonally powered solar pump for water. Electricity is not available. The campground is not plowed during the winter months.

Future improvements will include a manure storage facility, a firewood shed, and improved directional and informational signage.

Group Camp

The Black River State Forest has one group camp located at the north end of the forest which is a popular destination enjoyed by many. Reservations are required, with a two-day minimum stay on weekends. The camp includes both an indoor four-season facility and outdoor group campsites. The cabin has wooden bunk-beds to sleep twelve people and is equipped with a stove, refrigerator, gas fireplace, heated floors, and a bathroom with shower. The building is ADA compliant. An additional outdoor area accommodates a maximum of 50 people in tents or trailers. A year-round water supply is available in the heated cabin, while vault toilets, picnic tables, cooking grills, fire rings, and a dog kennel are available outdoors. Parking for 10 vehicles is available. Replacement or removal of the vault toilets is planned (a restroom will still be available in the indoor group facility).

Primitive Camping

Backpack camping is allowed anywhere on the forest, except on any island or near any designated recreational use area. Campers must be at least one mile away from their vehicle and 100 feet from any designated trail or road. Backpackers must obtain a Special Camp Registration Permit prior to camping. Currently water is available at each designated campground and at the Wildcat Trail parking lot. In the future, a water supply is planned at the Smrekar Ski Trail head. Toilet facilities are also

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provided at the Wildcat Trail, Smrekar Trail, Robinson Beach, and Oxbow Day Use Area. The Smrekar and Wildcat hike/bike/ski areas also represent the primary backpacking destination in the state forest.

Camping outside designated campgrounds is also allowed during the nine-day deer gun hunting season. Campers can start camping the Thursday before the hunting season starts. Hunters must obtain a Special Camp Registration Permit prior to camping and must indicate their camping location. No designated water or toilet facilities are provided for this use. Up to 160 permits are issued annually.

There are no planned changes for primitive camping on the state forest.

Canoe Camping

Two canoe campsites (considered primitive) south of Black River Falls, off Hawk Island Road, are available to canoeists only. Camping is limited to one night. Each site has a picnic table and a fire ring. There is a portable toilet shared for both campsites. No improvements are planned for these sites.

DAY USE AND PICNIC AREAS

Day use areas provide state forest visitors opportunities to picnic, swim, hike, bike, ski, fish, or simply enjoy the natural beauty of the area. Some sites also feature scenic vistas, hiking and nature trails, boat landings, or fishing piers. All day use areas on the Black River State Forest are rustic classification and only minor improvements are planned.

Fee Day Use Facilities

Fee day use facilities are located in the forest and provide visitors with a variety of amenities. Castle Mound has an interpretive trail, a bike trail, parking for 54 vehicles, playground equipment, a log cabin shelter with picnic tables, outdoor cooking grills, two kiosks, and a lookout tower. Pigeon Creek has a swimming beach, playground equipment, boat launch, parking for 40 vehicles, picnic area, contact station, information kiosk, interpretive trail, and bike trail. East Fork has a canoe landing, parking for 30 vehicles, contact station, and nature trail. These facilities are in need of minor upgrades to maintain the quality of the recreational experience.

Planned improvements at East Fork include upgrading the nature trail, updating interpretive signs, and adding an informational kiosk.

Robinson Beach will be closed to public vehicles and all improvements will be removed, including facilities, parking lots, and roads. The area will continue to be open for walk-in access for fishing and non-designated recreation activities including swimming and other non-motorized activities. A modification

to NR 45.11(7)(j) will be sought in order to allow watercraft use, such as canoes or kayaks, on Robinson Creek Pond. Upland and shoreline improvement projects, such as restoration of natural vegetation, will occur at Robinson Beach. The existing small graveled parking area along Cranmore Road, which has a current capacity for two vehicles, will be increased in size to accommodate a total of 6-12 vehicles for access to the south end of Robinson Beach Pond. This will provide access for those who still wish to recreate in this area at a low cost to the Department in terms of maintenance and enforcement. If erosion becomes an issue, the existing foot path from the parking lot along Cranmore Road to Robinson Beach Pond will be upgraded to a moderately developed trail including improvements to the base.

Pigeon Creek will be improved to accommodate additional users directed from Robinson Beach. If use significantly increases at Pigeon Creek, then a small paved parking area may be added near the entrance of the campground. An ADA accessible parking area and walkway to the beach will be constructed. Minor improvements will be made to the swimming area. Other changes at Pigeon Creek include the potential deepening of Pigeon Creek Flowage to improve fishing quality. Fish structures may be added.

Non-Fee Day Use Facilities

Three non-fee day use facilities are located on the state forest. Parking and limited picnic facilities are available. Perry Creek Day Use Area includes a cement boat landing ramp and a primitive hiking trail. The Dike 17 Tower Area has an observation tower and interpretive signs.

All existing designated non-fee day use areas will be continued under the plan. The Dike 17 Observation Tower will be evaluated in the future to determine the need for renovation, replacement, or removal.

Swimming

Swimming occurs at both designated and non-designated swimming beach areas. A designated beach has a regulatory marker or posted notice. Non-designated swim areas are any

**TABLE 2.27 BOAT AND CANOE LANDINGS
ON THE BLACK RIVER STATE FOREST**

Name of Landing	Motorized	Canoe
Perry Creek	Yes	Yes
Teal Flowage	Yes	Yes
East Fork	No	Yes
Bottom Road	No	Yes
Halls Creek	No	Yes
Masons Landing	No	Yes
Canoe Campsite	No	Yes

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waters that are not signed as “closed to swimming”. Swimming is at the user’s discretion since state forests do not supply lifeguards at any beach.

Pigeon Creek will remain as a designated swimming area. Robinson beach will no longer be a designated swimming area and visitors will be directed to Pigeon Creek.

Boat and Canoe Landings

The Black River State Forest has two boat landings for motorized craft at Perry Creek and Teal Flowage, which can also be used as canoe landings. There are six designated canoe landings. Some sites experience erosion problems due to rugged terrain or seasonal, fast water flow conditions.

Halls Creek landing will be reconstructed to accommodate fast water and steep bank conditions. If a new canoe landing is developed along the Black River, possibly at Paddy’s Rest, then the existing Bottom Road canoe landing will be closed.

DESIGNATED NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

The Black River State Forest will continue to offer a variety of designated trails. The phrase “designated trails” refer to trails that are designed, maintained, and limited to specific uses and are shown on the official map of the forest. Designated non-motorized trails on the Black River State Forest are available for recreational activities such as hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, or horseback riding. The Black River State Forest also offers numerous miles of non-designated “woods roads” which are open to hiking, biking, horseback riding, and snowshoeing, unless posted closed for a specific activity. No additional designated non-motorized trails are planned.

Cross-Country Ski Trails

The existing 24 miles of designated cross-country ski trails available on the Black River State Forest will be maintained. Grooming is done for both traditional and skate skiing when snow conditions allow. Associated facilities include a warming shelter located at the Smrekar trail head and two rest areas

TABLE 2.28 CURRENT AND PLANNED NON-MOTORIZED DESIGNATED TRAILS

Classification	NR 44 Classification	Current Miles	Planned Miles
Hike/Bike/Cross-Country Ski Trails			
Wildcat Loop	Lightly developed	3.5	3.5
Red Oak Loop	Lightly developed	2.5	2.5
Norway Pine Loop	Lightly developed	1.5	1.5
North Loop	Lightly developed	3.5	3.5
Central Loop	Lightly developed	4.0	4.0
Ridge Loop	Lightly developed	1.9	1.9
South Loop	Lightly developed	1.0	1.0
Trail Links	Lightly developed	6.1	6.1
Total		24.0	24.0
Hike/Bike Trails			
Castle Mound	Lightly developed	2.5	2.5
Perry Creek Segment	Lightly developed	2.5	0.0
Pigeon Creek Trail	Lightly developed	5.0	5.0
Total		10.0	7.5
Hike/Nature Trails			
Castle Mound	Lightly developed	1.5	1.5
Pigeon Creek	Lightly developed	1.5	1.5
East Forest	Lightly developed	1.0	1.0
Perry Creek	Primitive	1.0	1.0
Total		5.0	5.0
Equestrian Trails			
Horse Trails	Lightly developed	20.3	17.2
Total		20.3	17.2

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located along the Red Oak and Central trails which include Adirondack shelters, small fire rings, and picnic tables.

In addition, there is a 1.5 mile trail that is used for special events, such as the candlelight ski, that is groomed occasionally.

At the Smrekar Trail parking lot, electrical service will be added to the warming building, the existing contact station will be removed and a new storage facility constructed to replace the small building located at the Wildcat Trail. The well located along the Central Loop will be abandoned due to poor water quality. A new well and accessible hand pump will be installed at the trailhead located at the Smrekar Trail parking lot to provide a better source of potable water in a more convenient location for trail users.

Hiking/Nature Trails

The Black River State Forest offers three designated nature trails located at the three campgrounds totaling four miles of scenic beauty and a one mile primitive trail located at Perry Creek. Hiking is permitted on the designated ski trails when they are not groomed for cross-country skiing, and along the designated horse trails. The nature trail at East Fork Campground will be renovated and interpretive signs installed.

Mountain Biking

Thirty-four miles of designated bike trails are found on the Black River State Forest. Surface areas along the trail vary from sand or gravel to grass; topography is level to hilly. Mountain biking is also allowed on the designated cross-country ski trail when the surface is not groomed for skiing activities. In the future, the section of bike trail between Highway 27 and Perry Creek will be closed due to a lack of connectivity with the Castle Mound trail as a result of a bridge washout several years ago. This will result in a total of 31.5 miles of bike trail remaining.

Equestrian Trail

In 2008 the Black River State Forest offered 20.3 miles of designated equestrian trails. The plan will retain 17.2 miles of the existing trails. A 3.1 mile section of trail between West Clay School Road and Cemetery Road, which was shared with motorized recreational vehicles, will be closed to horse access to improve horse rider safety and to reduce conflict with motorized trail users. However, approximately 1,500 feet of the trail, between Seils Road and Cemetery Road, will remain designated as an equestrian trail. An additional two to 10 miles, starting from the Equestrian Camp, will be evaluated for future designation to create a short loop for horse riding enjoyment. Horses also may be ridden on town roads, logging roads, and other undesignated trails that are not signed as closed to the use. Equestrian riding is prohibited on designated nature trails, hike/bike/ski trails, within designated State Natural Areas, and in the Dike 17 Wildlife Area.

MOTORIZED TRAILS

The state forest's motorized trail system for snowmobiles, ATVs, and licensed dual-sport motorcycles is an integral part of a region-wide trail network that provides several hundred miles of riding opportunities. It provides year-round pleasure for recreational enthusiasts and contributes significantly to the local economy. During most years, the motorized trails on the Black River State Forest are open annually May 15th to October 15th, and December 15th to March 15th. The property manager has discretion to close any trails on the state forest based on safety, budgetary, or environmental reasons such as extreme fire danger or excessive rainfall. Because the state forest trail system links directly with Jackson County Forest and Parks' trails, consultation must occur between the two agencies prior to implementation of a closure or opening. The State Forest Superintendent also has authority to establish speed limits on designated motorized trails within the property boundary.

Beginning in 2008, the Black River State Forest began requiring all motorcycles on state designated trails to be licensed dual-sport motorcycles. Unlicensed motorcycles and dirt bikes, as well as street motorcycles, are not permitted on the state trails. This change is consistent with Jackson County's ordinance and state statutes. If unlicensed motorcycles or dirt bikes become legalized for access on streets, then access to state forest motorized trails may be considered. A decision would be made in conjunction with Jackson County. Street motorcycles, however, would continue to be denied access.

Currently, much of the motorized trail system is experiencing environmental challenges related to erosion or wetland crossings. Much of these issues stem back to the original development of the trails, because they were designed as snowmobile trails for use in winter months. The trails were not originally sited for use by ATVs or dual-sport motorcycles, which have become increasingly popular recreational uses on the state forest. The trails have experienced a steady increase in use since the advent of ATVs in the late 1980s.

This master plan attempts to address these environmental challenges to ensure a safe and sustainable motorized trail system. The objectives for improvements to the Black River State Forest motorized trail system are:

- Meet Department trail standards and establish a sustainable trail system.
- Minimize water quality and wetland impacts.
- Reduce soil erosion.
- Increase rider safety.
- Maintain and improve connectivity to the regional trail network and continue to provide a short loop trail.
- Decrease user conflicts by separating incompatible uses.
- Upgrade and maintain the existing infrastructure.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

In general, changes to the motorized trail system focus on improving trail tread, improving wetland crossings, reducing erosion and rutting, and protecting water quality, while improving rider experience and safety. The trail width in some locations will be narrowed where it has expanded from its original size due to heavy use in recent years. Restoration of vegetation in these areas will create a more natural appearance along the trail. Changes also focus on reducing user conflicts while maintaining or improving connectivity to the regional trail network.

As of 2008, the Black River State Forest has 47.8 miles of motorized trails. Of these miles, 33 miles are open to ATV use

during the summer and winter ATV seasons and snowmobile use during the winter. An additional 14.8 miles are specifically designated for snowmobile use only. Currently, horse access is permitted on 2.4 miles of the motorized trail between West Clay School Road and Cemetery Road.

When all master plan changes associated with the motorized trail are implemented, including the full development of a new trail connector in the Millston area and the closure of the Wildcat Loop (described in detail in the following sections), a total of 40.6 miles of improved riding pleasure will be available for motorized recreation. ATV/ snowmobile access will be avail-

TABLE 2.29 CURRENT AND PLANNED MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS

Trail Type	Current	Planned*	Change in Mileage
Total motorized trail mileage	47.8	40.6	-7.2
ATV and snowmobile mileage**	33.0	26.2	-6.8
Snowmobile only mileage	14.8	14.4	-0.4
Winter ATV mileage***	33.0	21.9	-11.1

* "Planned" refers to the point in time when 7.9 miles of the Wildcat Trail are closed to ATV use (after the Millston Loop is authorized).

** While ATV trail mileage on the state forest will be reduced by 6.8 miles, the regional ATV trail network will only be reduced by 1.2 miles pending the new trail connection in the Millston area (see discussion on next page).

*** The reduction of winter ATV mileage is a portion of the motorized trail which will be closed to ATV riding in the winter months. It is not a physical reduction in trail mileage on the property; therefore, it does not contribute to the total change in motorized trail mileage.



RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

able on 26.2 miles; however, 4.3 miles of the Castle Mound trail will be open to ATV use only during the summer months to be consistent with Jackson County Forest policy. Snowmobile only access will be offered on 14.4 miles. When all changes are implemented, a net reduction of 7.2 miles of motorized trail on the state forest will result. For a summary of current and future motorized trail miles and locations, see Table 2.29 and Maps 2.27 and 2.28 in the Appendix.

The following list is a summary of the planned improvements to the motorized trail system. All other motorized trails will be retained in their present designated use and location.

Property-Wide

- Upgrade the majority of the motorized trail surface by crowning, installing culverts to divert water, and hauling in aggregate rock materials where needed. Work will be pursued as state and federal waterway/wetland permits are approved and funding is secured; all wetland protection requirements will be met.

Northern Trails

- Eliminate horse access on the motorized trail system, except for 1,500 feet between Seils Road and Cemetery Road, to improve trail safety and minimize user conflicts.

Castle Mound Trails

- Develop a use designation on the Castle Mound trail consistent with the adjoining Jackson County motorized trail. Currently ATV use is allowed during summer months only. Use designation may be re-evaluated and changed in the future.
- Currently, a snowmobile only trail travels along Highway 12 on private land, enters the state forest just north of Castle Mound Road, and travels directly to the 7th Street parking lot. If this private trail should become designated for ATV use in the future, the state forest's adjacent 0.1 mile section would also be designated for ATV use.

Wildcat Trails

General

- Close a 1.8 mile loop of snowmobile only trail to all public motorized access to eliminate conflict between users in the Overmeyer Hills Recreation Area.
- Re-route a short section of trail just south of Stanton Creek Road to address erosion issues. The re-routed trail will be located either on state forest land, or, if the opportunity exists in the future, routed onto Cut-Across Road. Moving the trail to Cut-Across Road requires either acquisition of the town road or having the Town of Millston officially designate the road as a route.
- Increase the parking area along North Settlement Road by up to 25%.

Short-term Management Prescriptions for the Wildcat Loop

- Maintain 7.9 miles open to motorized access for ATVs and snowmobiles.
- Open the trail from the Friday before Memorial Day through Labor Day for the summer ATV season. The trail will be open for the full winter season.
- Install gates at access points to enforce seasonal and temporary closures.
- Trail conditions will be monitored more frequently, especially following precipitation events, with temporary trail closures implemented as needed.
- Trail maintenance (i.e. grooming) will occur at current levels.
- No significant trail improvement projects will be initiated except for safety reasons or if the trail becomes impassable.
- The Wildcat Loop (7.9 miles) will be managed with the prescriptions above until the Millston Loop is authorized for use. After the Millston Loop is authorized, the Wildcat Loop will be closed to ATV use and managed according to the long-term management prescriptions below (2.5 miles will be retained as a designated snowmobile trail).

Long-term Management Prescriptions for the Wildcat Loop

When the Millston Loop is authorized for use, the following management prescriptions will be followed:

- Close a 5.4 mile section of motorized trail, west of Shale Road and south of Kling Road, to all public motorized access.
- Close a 2.5 mile section of trail south of the snowmobile only trail to ATV use, but retain the trail as a designated snowmobile trail.
- Restore significant wetland crossings by removing fill, removing culverts, and allowing natural water flow to occur.
- Retain access for state forest operations on sections of the trail closed to public motorized use.
- If three years after the approval of the master plan by the Natural Resources Board lapse before the Millston Loop is authorized, and trail conditions on the Wildcat Loop degrade significantly, then the appropriate trail improvements, including wetland crossing upgrades and trail base improvements, will be implemented. If major improvements are implemented on the Wildcat Loop, the Millston Loop will no longer be considered, although a legal connector to the Jackson County ATV trails will still be an objective.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Millston Loop

- Participate in and coordinate the cooperative effort to identify and authorize an ATV trail that connects the Town of Millston to the existing Jackson County ATV trails leading to Black River Falls.
- Authorize approximately 1.1 miles of existing snowmobile trail south of Millston for ATV use. This section of trail will only be improved and opened for ATV use after all of the various landowners, potentially including the Town of Millston, Jackson County, Union Pacific Railroad, and the Department of Transportation (DOT), identify and authorize segments contributing to the new trail connector. Trail improvements will be coordinated in cooperation with the landowners identified above.

If the new trail connector is authorized in full, it will provide an additional 6.7 miles of ATV trail in the region, providing both a regional connector through Millston, as well as a short loop trail. When the Millston Loop is developed in full and the Wildcat Loop is closed, the regional ATV trail network will only be reduced by approximately one mile.

STATE TRAILS NETWORK

The 2001 State Trails Network Plan identified a 115 mile active rail corridor from Marshland to Wisconsin Rapids as a potential future long-distance recreation trail. If this rail corridor becomes abandoned in the future the DNR has approval to purchase this corridor pending funding. This corridor travels through approximately four miles in the northern portion of the Black River State Forest.

If the rail corridor becomes abandoned and pursued as a potential recreation trail by the Department, then the future use and development would be determined at that time. Consideration may be given to existing trails that connect to the rail corridor including the portion that crosses the Black River State Forest. The Black River State Forest would be a participant in this discussion.

FISHING

Water access to anglers is primarily provided by boat landings and fishing piers. Currently one fishing pier is located at Teal Flowage and is ADA accessible. The State Forest Superintendent may construct additional fishing piers, or relocate them, as deemed necessary and consistent with the land use classification standards for the site. Fishing regulations are outside the scope of the master plan.

HUNTING AND TRAPPING

The state forest will continue to offer abundant opportunities for small and big game hunting and trapping. The diverse landscape of different forest types, lakes and wetlands currently found on the property will continue to provide important habitat for many game species. The extensive system of logging roads and non-designated trails will continue to be open for hunting access by foot or by motor vehicle. Hunters can apply for a Disabled Motorized Use Permit, which will be approved on a case-by-case basis. Non-motorized areas where one can seek a more remote, solitary, walk-in hunting experience will remain at approximately current levels. Hunting and trapping regulations are outside the scope of the state forest master plan.

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

The Black River State Forest encourages visitors to take the opportunity to learn about forestry, natural history, wildlife management, and other natural resources topics. Currently, nature trails with interpretive signage exist at Castle Mound and Pigeon Creek Campgrounds. Interpretive signs will be developed for the nature trail at the East Fork Campground. Educational programs at Castle Mound Campground will be offered as staffing and budgets allow.

RECREATION LAND USE AGREEMENTS

Currently there are no recreational land use agreements on the Black River State Forest. The Department has a long history of cooperation with private organizations to manage and maintain recreational and essential community facilities. Examples of recreational land use agreements include ski and bike trails, snowmobile trails, youth camps, and public shooting ranges. Land use agreements on the state forest will be evaluated periodically.

AESTHETIC MANAGEMENT ON LAKE AND STREAM SHORELINES

The state-owned shorelines on lakes and streams within the Black River State Forest are designated a Class A Scenic Management Zone. All management activities along state owned lake and stream shorelines will follow guidelines of the DNR Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook and Best Management Practices for water quality.

Management activities that may be done when needed include: the development and maintenance of authorized facilities, herbicide application, burning, installation of fish habitat improvement devices including tree drops along the shoreline, trail and road construction, erosion control, hazard tree removal in public use areas, the removal of trees to maintain or create scenic vistas and invasive species control.

REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT**REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT****FOREST BOUNDARY EXPANSION**

Seven boundary expansion areas, totaling 19,836 acres, are planned for the Black River State Forest and are shown on Map 2.29 in the Appendix. One goal of the boundary expansion is to protect undeveloped shoreline of the Black River and its tributaries, safeguarding ecologically important habitat, water quality, and scenic values of the Black River watershed. Another goal of the expansion area is to link the Black River State Forest with other nearby publicly owned and managed lands. This includes significant blocks of forested land which would be managed using sustainable forestry practices and would reap associated wildlife, fishery, endangered resources, and recreational benefits. Existing development areas were excluded, where possible, from the boundary expansion project. If all lands were purchased within the expanded property boundary, the Black River State Forest would encompass approximately 88,073 acres, excluding water.

The Halls Creek Area of the boundary expansion includes approximately 9.6 miles of Halls Creek, a tributary to the Black River. The proposed expansion area includes land in Alma and Adams townships, with the boundary following section lines, quarter-quarter section lines, township roads (parts of Stazak Road, West Road, Camp Road), County Trunk E, and the Union Pacific Railroad. Areas of existing development were excluded from the proposal. The majority of the area is held in relatively large private ownerships along with small acreages owned by Jackson County Forest.

The Hatfield Area, located within Adams Township, includes approximately 2.3 miles of the Black River. This expansion area lies between an area west-northwest of the Black River, 200 feet east-southeast of the toe of the dike and canal created by the Hatfield Hydro Partnership, and south-southwest of the Hatfield Sanitary District property. This parcel is owned by the Hatfield Hydro Partnership.

The East Fork Area represents the largest of the proposed boundary expansion areas. The proposal includes land in the City Point and Komensky townships, with approximately 7.7 miles of the East Fork of the Black River running through this landscape. A large privately owned trust enrolled in the state's forest tax law program, and Jackson County Forest are the two major landholders within this area, with a few other smaller ownerships scattered throughout.

The North Bottoms Area is located in the Town of Brockway. It is bordered on the north and east by the section line, on the west by the Black River, and on the south by quarter-quarter section lines. This area is primarily owned by one owner and contains approximately 0.9 miles of the Black River.

The South River Area is located in Brockway, Manchester, and Irving townships. The boundary follows primary roads or highways, section lines, and a power line right-of-way. The northern boundary abuts the current state forest ownership while the southern boundary follows the Jackson County line. Areas of existing development were excluded, where possible, from the expansion area. The most significant feature of this area is the 10.1 miles of the Black River that bisects the majority of the area.

The Jay Creek Area includes land sandwiched between the Black River State Forest on the west and the Jay Creek State Natural Area on the east. All land lies in the Town of Knapp.

The Potter Area is located east of Dike 17. It is a mix of pine and oak forest that contains the confluence of Morrison and Town Line Creeks.

The expanded boundary meets the overall ecology, environmental health, and recreational needs of the Black River State Forest. Areas within the expanded boundary would be considered for a range of protection options including purchase, cooperative agreements and conservation easements.

REAL ESTATE ACQUISITION POLICIES

All property purchases are on a willing seller basis. As required by state and federal laws, the Department pays "just compensation" for property, which is the estimated market value based on an appraisal by a certified licensed appraiser. At times, it is in the interest of both the Department and the landowner for the Department to acquire only part of the rights to a property, or an easement. The Department has a number of easement alternatives available to address these situations.

Landowners within the state forest boundary will be contacted periodically by Department staff to explain the Department's land acquisition program and to ascertain whether there is an interest in selling their property. Acquisition priorities within the state forest vary from year to year and are based on a variety of factors, such as resource management or recreation needs and available funding. Acquisition is always based on the landowner's willingness to sell or donate their property.

New land acquisitions will be classified under the land management classification system outlined in Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 44.05. State forest staff will base the

ROAD MANAGEMENT

classification of the acquisition on the ecological suitability and state forest management objectives.

AIDES IN LIEU OF TAXES

For all State properties purchased after 1992, the Department makes an annual payment in lieu of real estate taxes to replace property taxes that would have been paid if the property had remained in private ownership. More detailed information on how the Department pays property taxes may be found in a publication entitled Public Lands and Property Taxes, PUB-FR-166 or <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/publications/PLPT.pdf>.

FUTURE BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT PROCESS

From time to time, adjustments in the forest boundary are needed. In some cases parcels of land are removed from the boundary to allow alternative, necessary public uses by local governments. In other cases it may be desirable to add small parcels adjacent to the forest so they can be purchased for resource protection or to meet expanding recreational needs. Property boundary changes of 40 acres or more require approval by the Natural Resources Board. Wisconsin Administrative Code Ch. NR 44 provides a plan amendment process that may be used to make adjustments to the forest boundary. Requests to amend the master plan for a property boundary change are forwarded to the Natural Resources Board. If the Board agrees to consider the proposal, the subsequent review process includes public notification and an opportunity to comment. The Board must approve all plan amendments. Because federal funding has been used for land acquisition on the state forest, approvals from federal agencies may also be required prior to removing land from the approved boundary.

EASEMENTS, ACCESS PERMITS, AND LAND USE AGREEMENTS

Easements provide access across state property for utilities, town roads, or county highways. Easements are permanent and would continue to be upheld under the revised master plan. Access Permits provide access across state property to private ownership within the forest boundary. Land use agreements provide for a variety of uses on state forest property, such as snowmobile trails and other recreational facilities open to the public. Land use agreements and Access Permits would continue to be evaluated periodically. The Department may grant new land use agreements where they meet a significant public good and do not conflict with the plan's goals and objectives.

**ROAD MANAGEMENT**

Access across and within the Black River State Forest is on a variety of roadways including federal, state, and county highways, and town and state forest roads. Some roads are maintained as permanent roads, while others are only temporary for timber harvesting or other management activities. In 2008, the Black River State Forest mapped and classified all roads as part of a property-wide road inventory. The state forest owns and maintains 4.1 miles of fully developed, permanent all-season roads and 10.9 miles of lightly developed roads used seasonally or temporarily. The state forest will not maintain roads for the expressed benefit of private individuals or residents, but may, at the discretion of the State Forest Superintendent, consider land use agreements.

ROAD CLASSIFICATION AND GENERAL ROAD MANAGEMENT

There are several types of road classifications outlined in NR 44.07(3). The classifications reflect a range of development and maintenance standards. Road classifications include primitive, lightly-developed, moderately developed, and fully developed. Each Department managed road is assigned a development classification as part of the road inventory project described above.

Management of lands along the roads within the Black River State Forest will reflect the management objectives for the specified area classifications. All road right-of-ways (66 feet) will continue to be controlled and maintained by their current operator (state, county, or town).

The Department managed roadways within the Black River State Forest will be maintained in part according to the following requirements from the Best Management Practices for water quality:

- Inspect active roads regularly (especially after heavy rainfall).
- Clear debris from culverts, ditches, dips and other drainage structures to decrease clogging that can lead to washouts.
- Keep traffic to a minimum during wet periods and spring breakup to reduce maintenance needs.
- Shape road surfaces periodically to maintain proper surface drainage and remove berms on the edge of the road that trap water.
- Apply non-toxic dust control agents, when necessary, in a way that will keep them from entering lakes, streams and groundwater, or from causing other environmental problems.

NON-METALLIC MINING POLICY



NON-METALLIC MINING POLICY

State, County, and Town Roads

State, county, and town roads within the state forest boundary will continue to be managed by their respective jurisdictions and are outside the scope of the Black River State Forest Master Plan.

ACCESS POLICY FOR PUBLIC VEHICLES

All state forest roads are open to public access with street licensed vehicles unless the road is bermed, gated, or signed closed. State forest roads are closed to ATVs. The State Forest Superintendent may close a road to public use if it becomes degraded, unsafe, or for law enforcement reasons.

State forests regularly open and close forest roads primarily to conduct forest management. Roads open for management purposes are generally open to the public during the management period (one to two years) and a short time thereafter to allow access for firewood collection or other uses. Following this period they are closed with gates or berms.

AESTHETIC MANAGEMENT FOR ROADWAY CORRIDORS

Forest management techniques can be adjusted along roadways on the forest to ensure the long-term maintenance of scenic conditions is proportionate to the road's level of public use. The DNR Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook distinguishes three separate road types including Class A, Class B, and Class C roads.

Class A Roads are travel routes with heavy to medium use or roads where the use is for the specific purpose of enjoying scenery. These areas should be developed and maintained to the greatest scenic potential for public enjoyment. All state highways and county roads located within the state forest are classified as Class A roads. All management activities will follow guidelines according to the DNR Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook.

Class B Roads serve a variety of uses where the public traffic load is generally light to medium. Scenic attractiveness is of equal importance and is in balance with other land management objectives.

Class C Roads are primarily used for management access and public use does not occur, is infrequent, or is primarily for activities such as hunting, fishing, or berry picking. Aesthetics are considered in the management along these roadways; however, they are secondary to the prescribed land management activities for the area.

The Department may use gravel, sand, fill dirt, or other fill material from Department-owned lands for Department use. Under certain circumstances other government bodies or agencies may also have access to these materials. Section 23.20 of the Wisconsin Statutes states, "the department may permit any town, county, or state agency to obtain gravel, sand, fill dirt or other fill material needed for road purposes from any department-owned gravel pit or similar facility if this material is unavailable from private vendors within a reasonable distance of the worksite. The department shall charge a fee for this material commensurate with the fee charged by private vendors."

Any non-metallic mining in the Black River State Forest, whether by the Department or as authorized under s. 23.20, Stats., is regulated under the reclamation requirements of NR 135, Wis. Adm. Code, - except for sites that do not exceed one acre in total for the life of the mining operation or are otherwise exempt under s. NR 135.02(3), Wis. Adm. Code. Site reclamation under NR 135 is administered by the county — or in some cases municipal — regulatory authority.

NR 135 requires mining sites to be reclaimed according to a reclamation plan to meet uniform state reclamation standards. Most Department of Transportation (DOT) projects are exempt from NR 135 but subject to WisDOT's own mining site restoration requirements as provided in s. NR 135.02(3)(j), Wis. Adm. Code. In general, DOT and its contractors would be discouraged from non-metallic mining on the state forest property. The use of state-owned land by the state and municipalities for gravel pits and sand will continue on a case-by-case basis. Nonmetallic mining at new sites will not be permitted where a Geological Feature of Importance has been identified.

IMPORTANT GEOLOGIC FEATURES

The Black River State Forest's geology is unique amongst the state forest system. The property lies at the edge of the glaciated central plains, east of the "driftless" area of Wisconsin. The state forest includes part of the former bed of glacial Lake Wisconsin, un-glaciated buttes, sandstone hills and castellated bluffs. Because many of these features contain sand and gravel deposits, they would be subject to extraction and other disturbances if not on public land. The Department recognizes the importance of setting aside and preserving representative examples of these non-renewable geological features to serve as a base for geological and ecological educational programs and as a baseline against which to compare sites that become disturbed in various ways.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROVISIONS



GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROVISIONS

The following section describes general policies and provisions that are applied to all lands of the Black River State Forest that are under state ownership.

FOREST RECONNAISSANCE

The state forest uses a forest inventory system to gather and record information on its land. The database created from the inventory captures the physical description of these areas (dominant forest cover type, soils, ecological attributes, stand origin, guidelines, restrictions and goals). Reports are generated to summarize forest stands that are scheduled for management review. The acreage listed for review is considered the forest's "sustainable harvest" meaning those lands are due for a decision regarding management. Some stands inventoried, such as passive management zones contained in some native community management areas, are excluded from the management schedule. Forestry staff conduct field exams to verify whether stands scheduled for management are ready for the prescription. If stands are not yet ready for management, the reconnaissance database is updated and rescheduled for future review. Stands rescheduled for future review are still considered accomplishments toward the forest's annual sustainable harvest acreage. For stands that are ready for management, forestry staff consult with other Department programs such as endangered resources, fisheries, and wildlife to ensure an integrated resource approach prior to establishing the proposed practice. When establishing the practice, silvicultural guidelines and BMPs for water quality are followed. After a management practice is completed, the forest reconnaissance database is updated. In the future, the state forest will be using a Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) system in conjunction with the reconnaissance system. This system will track growth, mortality, and management of forested lands and allow for more concise management of state forest lands. Using the Continuous Forest Inventory system will not change the objectives stated in the master plan.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WATER QUALITY

All management activities within the state forest will follow, as a minimum standard, the guidelines in Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality: Field Manual for Loggers, Landowners and Land Managers (DNR PUB-FR-093-03).

FOREST PEST CONTROL

As stated in Wisconsin Statute 26.30, it is the public policy of the state to control forest pests threatening forests of the state. Within the Black River State Forest, any significant forest pest event will be evaluated with consideration given to the property management goals and the potential threat of the pest to other landowners. Infestations of the non-native gypsy moth caterpillar will be managed according to the forest's Gypsy Moth Management Plan. Responses to significant infestations from other forest pests, including but not limited to the Emerald Ash Borer, may include timber salvage or pesticide treatments. Any response to a significant pest outbreak will be evaluated by an interdisciplinary team of scientists and communicated through press releases and notices to interested parties.

INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

Invasive non-native species have become recognized in recent years as a major threat to the integrity of the state forests. These species have the ability to invade natural systems and proliferate, often dominating a community to the detriment and sometimes the exclusion of native species. Invasive species can alter natural ecological processes by reducing the interactions of many species to the interaction of only a few species.

If detected, invasive species may be controlled using appropriate and effective methods, including but not limited to the use of herbicides, cutting, or hand removal. Control methods may be restricted in certain sensitive management areas. Before initiating control measures, the management prescriptions for the area being treated will be referenced. The property will develop and maintain an invasive species inventory and control plan. In addition, Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Invasive Species will be incorporated into management practices on the property.

The installation of power washers for ATVs at ATV parking lots will be considered as a potential tool to limit the spread of invasive species.

CHEMICAL USE

Approved herbicides and pesticides may be used for various purposes on the forest, such as to control invasive plants, to control plant competition in forest regeneration areas, or for insect control except as restricted in the management prescriptions in this master plan. All Department procedures and herbicide and pesticide label requirements will be followed.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROVISIONS

ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN PROTECTION

The Black River State Forest and surrounding Meadow Valley landscape contain 119 rare animal species including 27 that are State endangered or threatened and 49 rare plant species including 10 that are State endangered or threatened. Five federally endangered or threatened animals also were identified through inventories conducted by the Endangered Resources program.

All management prescriptions in the proposed master plan will consider the needs of these species and the potential impacts to the species and their habitat. Management actions being planned on the state forest are checked against an up-to-date database of listed species to assure that no department actions result in the direct taking of any known endangered or threatened resource. Please refer to Appendix B for a listing of the endangered, threatened, and Species of Special Concern found on this property.

The Karner blue butterfly (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*) (Kbb) was listed as a federally endangered species in December of 1992. The Kbb inhabits oak/pine barrens, a globally rare vegetative community that exists on the Black River State Forest. The historic range of Kbb extends from Minnesota to New York and New Jersey. A Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Plan was published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2003. That plan designates recovery properties across the Kbb range and assigns population goals for each property. The Black River State Forest is included in that listing with a goal of one population with at least 3,000 Kbb (as stated in the 2003 Recovery Plan). Several potential recovery sites have been identified on the forest. When additional information has been collected on Kbb populations and management potential, a Recovery Implementation Plan will be developed. The property will follow the most current version of the Kbb Recovery Implementation Plan, along with the Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan.

FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

Many of the initiatives proposed in the master plan are dependent upon additional funding and staffing. Operational funding for state forests is established bi-annually by the state legislature. Development projects follow an administrative funding and approval process outside of the master plan. Therefore, a number of legislative and administrative processes outside of the master plan determine the rate this master plan can be implemented.

DISABLED ACCESSIBILITY

All new construction and renovation of facilities will follow guidelines set forth within the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will also be done in a manner consistent with NR 44 standards of the land use classification of the site where the development is located. Across the Black River State Forest, the State Forest Superintendent has the authority to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, consistent with the requirements of the area's land use classification.

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

New or renovated recreational facilities will be designed according to state building codes and Department design standards and codes. The State Forest Superintendent may also close and relocate campsites, renovate facilities, relocate trail segments and post speed limits on trails as deemed necessary.

The State Forest Superintendent may maintain and construct storage buildings, employee housing, and/or other similar facilities to support the management of the state forest, as is authorized by normal Department facility approval processes. The structure's location and design must be consistent with the land classification requirements in NR 44 and the management objectives for the area in which it is located.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

All facilities will comply with federal, state, and local health and sanitation codes; such as well testing, campground licensing and wastewater treatment. The State Forest Superintendent has the authority to close campsites or campgrounds, trails, and other facilities on the forest when necessary due to health, safety, or environmental damage concerns.

Within designated public use areas such as campgrounds, picnic areas, parking lots, and high use trail systems, trees or other natural elements that are deemed public hazards will be removed. Safety inspections are done at least twice per year.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

The property maintains on file an emergency action plan that describes staff response and coordination with other agencies to natural disasters as they affect public safety and facilities. It is reviewed annually.

AUTHORIZED RESPONSE TO CATASTROPHIC EVENTS

Wildfires, timber diseases, and insect infestations shall be controlled to the degree appropriate to protect the values of each management area. Necessary emergency actions will be taken to protect public health and safety. Appropriate management responses to catastrophic events are determined on a

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROVISIONS

case-by-case basis, and action will be taken as appropriate. At a minimum, salvage of trees damaged by wind, fire, ice, disease, or insects may occur if consistent with the objectives of the management area.

FIRE SUPPRESSION

As stated in Wisconsin Statutes 26.11, "The Department is vested with power, authority and jurisdiction in all matters relating to the prevention, detection and suppression of forest fires outside the limits of incorporated villages and cities in the state except as provided in sub (2), and to do all things necessary in the exercise of such power, authority and jurisdiction." Forest fire suppression actions within the state forest will consider the property management goals and the threats of the fire to life and property. Appropriate techniques will be used in each event to provide effective fire suppression while minimizing resource damage. Selected areas of the state forest are periodically used for fire equipment training purposes.

REFUSE MANAGEMENT

Refuse is collected by a private contractor from designated sites at campgrounds and other primary use facilities. Recyclables are also collected by the property. Visitors are required to carry out any refuse they bring when no designated refuse or recycling receptacles are available. This carry-in, carry-out policy applies to most primitive campsites, trails, and boat landings. Burying of refuse is not allowed anywhere on the property.

CORRECTION CREW ACTIVITIES

The Department of Corrections operates a minimum security facility on the Black River State Forest. When working on the state forest, correction crews perform duties under the guidance of a sergeant with all work assignments pre-approved by the State Forest Superintendent. A Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies will be maintained to describe appropriate work projects on the state forest.

MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Use of the property by the military will be restricted to activities that are compatible with the objectives of the master plan. Approved military activities require a special use permit approved by the State Forest Superintendent. Military activities that generally occur on state forests include: orienteering training, wilderness camping, cooperative training, and development projects that further the goals of the property, such as trail construction or fish habitat improvement. Other activities consistent with the master plan and Department policies may be considered and approved by the property manager.

RESEARCH

The Black River State Forest provides an operational and strategic location for experimental trials and research, especially with regard to tree improvement, genetics, forest health and flowages. The research conducted by Department managers, scientists, and educational partners can be beneficial for the forest, the Department and the general public. Scientific research that is compatible with the ecological and aesthetic attributes of the site is generally supported. The State Forest Superintendent has the authority to approve or deny requests for research projects on the Black River State Forest.

PROPERTY WIDE MANAGEMENT OF DAMS AND FLOWAGES

The Black River State Forest contains 20 man-made impoundments and flowages constructed by damming small streams. The dams were created in the 1930s by the Resettlement Administration to create large shallow impoundments within the wetland areas of the forest. Over 90% of the impoundments created during the 1930s are still present on the forest today.

Maintenance, repair, and/or removal of dikes and dams will be evaluated and conducted on a case-by-case basis, based on cost-effectiveness, property needs, anticipated benefits, and wildlife habitat impacts. Existing dams and flowages will be maintained through tree and brush removal, mowing, and visual inspections of structures. Consultation with the Dam Safety Engineer will occur prior to making any major changes to the dike and dam system.

FOREST CERTIFICATION

In 2004, Wisconsin State Forests gained dual Forest Certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). Independent, third-party certification means management of Wisconsin's forests meets strict standards for ecological, social, and economic sustainability. In 2009, State Forests were re-certified under FSC and SFI. The State Forest program will continue to participate in forest certification. The status of certification corrective actions will be shared annually.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The public and other governmental agencies will have the opportunity for on-going involvement in the implementation of this master plan. This communication plan describes how the public will be notified about activities and issues on the Black River State Forest.

Annually the State Forest Superintendent will write a report that summarizes the following:

For the past year, the primary management and development activities that were completed and other significant issues that were addressed.

For the coming year, outline any proposed management and development activities and any changing management actions or approaches.

The State Forest Superintendent will maintain a list of persons, groups, and governments interested in receiving the annual report. When requested, the State Forest Superintendent will provide the information via U.S. mail, e-mail or direct them to the Department's internet web site.

Annually, the Black River State Forest will hold a Stakeholders' meeting which is designed to update interested parties on state forest proposed activities.

In the event the Department considers a change to the master plan through a plan variance or amendment, the public will be advised of the proposal and informed of the review and comment process. As appropriate, a public news release will be prepared and stakeholders notified of the comment process.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION

The Black River State Forest Superintendent will consult annually with the Ho-Chunk Nation on state forest management issues. Additional consultation meetings with the Nation may be scheduled should issues warrant immediate attention.

CONTACT PERSON

The Black River State Forest Superintendent should be contacted regarding the master plan or other state forest related topics. At the time of this publication, the Black River State Forest Superintendent contact information is:

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PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN